

# Dice of Arkham – rules 1.63

## a game by Mads L. Brynnum

*Shadows are descending on Arkham. The portents have been growing worse ever since that fateful day you surprised an intruder in the university library and learnt more about the sinister plans of deranged maniacs than you had ever hoped for.*

*But who would believe you even if you showed them? Who would believe the abominations that lurk behind the stars waiting to devour the world? And who would believe that someone would ever be mad enough to call these beings to earth?*

*Noone. Not a single person would believe you and therefore you are all that stands between eldritch terrors and humanity. You, and you alone must find the seals that can stop the crazed plans of those who follow the great old ones. And you've better hurry.*

## **1. STARTING**

### **Goal of the game**

Evil cultists are trying to summon a creature that will, as is often the case in these kinds of stories, destroy the world as we know it. You have to stop them by finding the seals that will prevent the ritual and bind the creature before they find the keys that bring it forth.

More precisely your goal is to use your dice gather enough investigation to find three seals before the time run out or you're either killed or driven insane. And all you need is a print of the game sheet, these rules, eight six-sided dice, and eight small beads or tokens.

### **Setup**

Print the game sheet. Find six six-sided dice of one colour (investigator dice) and two of another (mythos dice). Then grab eight small markers such as pennies or beads. You now have what you need to play, but if you have lots of dice lying around, you might want to find some of a third colour to act as fight dice.

Place the game sheet in front of you – preferably on a plain surface since this will make using it easier. Place a marker on the grey spaces on the health, sanity, fight, and magic meters. Place a marker on the start space of the investigation track and on top of the text saying “begin” on both the seal and key track, and place a marker on the space marked “1” on the time track.

Set aside one investigation die as it will only enter play when certain conditions are met. You are now ready to save the world.

### **The game sheet**

The game sheet is foremost of all used to record information and as a handy reference to what the dice generate. The big green boxes serve as place holders for locked dice, whereas the different tracks allow you to record your stats (health, sanity, magic, and fight) and your progress – or that of the cultists. The two small green boxes near the yellow sign are where you place the mythos dice after having rolled them in the beginning of each turn. That way you can easily see what evil awaits you later on.

## **2. BASIC CONCEPTS**

### **Timer and winning**

You have a set amount of time to generate enough investigation to find each seal. If you don't manage to do so, the cultists have found the next key they need and are now one step closer to finishing their ritual.

If you find all three seals, you win the game. If the cultists find three keys, the world is destroyed. That means you lose, in case of doubt.

Every time a seal or a key is found, you resolve an event. The event depends on whether the cultists or you manage to come one step closer to winning. Events are found at the end of the rules.

As the game begins the cultists are already ahead and thus the time marker starts on the space marked "1".

## **The dice**

Basically you only and always roll normal, six-sided dice. But since the dice have different meanings, the rules will refer to them as follows: investigator dice, mythos die, and fight dice. The latter will again be divided into investigator fight dice and cultist or creature fight dice, but more on that later.

### *Investigator dice*

On your turn you roll five (5) investigator dice. When you find the first seal, this will increase to six (6).

Investigator dice may be rolled a total of three times each turn rerolling any or all dice each time. You may lock and unlock dice at any point between rolls, but ones are automatically locked. Before the second and third roll you can unlock a die showing one by paying one sanity.

The dice generate the following resources/dangers:

- 1 – Locked. For every two 1s locked after third roll, move one die to the mythos dice pool. This will count as one extra cultist you have to fight.
- 2 – Advance the time marker one step.
- 3 – One investigation
- 4 – Two investigation
- 5 – Fight
- 6 – Magic

If you have three of one number (excluding twos and ones) you gain an extra die worth of that effect. So if you roll 4, 4, 4, 3, and 6 you gain a total of nine investigation and one magic.

### *Mythos dice*

You also roll two (2) mythos dice alongside your investigator dice each turn. They are then immediately placed in the mythos boxes on the game sheet. The mythos dice tell you what nasty stuff you encounter in the mythos phase during your turn.

- 1 – A monster attacks
- 2 – two cultists attack
- 3 – three cultists attack
- 4 – Lose one sanity
- 5 – Nothing happens
- 6 – Nothing happens

Also, if you roll a double, the timer marker will be advanced one step during the mythos phase. This can be avoided by paying 1D2 sanity or 1D2 health symbolising that you risk yourself in order to keep the cultists off track. So a roll of 2 and 2 will advance the time marker one step and cause you to be attacked by four cultists.

More about battling cultists and monsters below.

## **Resources**

In the game you have health, sanity, fight, and magic.

### *Health*

Your physical health. If it reaches zero you lose the game. Fighting cultists and monsters will cost you health. You begin the game with ten health.

### *Sanity*

The more you learn about the mythos, the more insane you'll get. If your sanity reaches zero, you lose the game. Sanity can be lost in numerous ways during the game. You begin the game with ten sanity.

#### *Fight*

Used to fight cultists and monsters. Not as effective against monsters. You can save fight from turn to turn, but can never have more than nine. You begin the game with three fight.

#### *Magic*

Used to fight monsters and cultists. Not as effective against cultists. You can save magic from turn to turn, but can never have more than nine. You begin the game with three magic.

### **3. PLAYING THE GAME**

The game is played over a number of turns which is again divided into several phases. At the start of every turn you roll investigator dice that will give your options. You'll use them to gather investigation that will let you find the seals, and to battle your opponents. But since the cultists know you're on their tail, you also roll two mythos dice each turn. Mythos dice will send cultists or eldritch creatures against you, or they will cost you sanity.

#### **The game turn**

Each game turn consists of the following phases:

##### *1. Dice phase*

- a. Roll mythos dice and all your investigator dice. Place the mythos dice in the mythos dice boxes on the game sheet for future reference.
- b. You may now reroll any or all of your investigator dice a total of two times locking and unlocking dice as you see fit. When locking a dice, place it in the appropriate box on the game sheet. Remember that 1s are automatically locked and you must pay one sanity if you want to unlock a die showing one. When you're satisfied with your results or after the third roll, place the dice in the boxes on the sheet and proceed to next phase.

##### *2. Investigator phase*

Now resolve the investigator dice beginning with 1s and moving up.

- a. For every two 1s, place a die near the mythos dice symbolizing an extra cultist you have to fight in the mythos phase.
- b. For every 2, advance the timer marker one step.
- c. For every 3, advance one step on the investigation track. If you have three or more 3s, move an extra step. If you land on or pass a red space, place a die near the mythos dice – this is also an extra cultist you have to face.
- d. For every 4, advance two steps on the investigation track. If you have three or more 4s, move two extra steps. Remember the red spaces.
- e. For every 5, gain one fight. If you have three or more 5s, gain an extra point of fight.
- f. For every 6, gain one magic. If you have three or more 6s, gain an extra point of magic.

You have to apply all results, unless, of course you max out on a resource or reach the end of a track. If you have three or more of the same dice, you gain an extra die worth of that resource. This does not apply to dice showing 1s and 2s.

If you begin your turn on the elder sign space on the investigation track (and only then) you may use investigation to heal instead of moving on the track. You can gain one point of either health or sanity for each two points of investigation you use. You may also choose to just move on the track or a combination of healing and moving. If you want (and if you roll the right numbers) you can remain on the elder sign space for several turns healing each turn. Remember that you have to use all investigation generated by the dice.

##### *3. Mythos phase*

Now you resolve the mythos dice and fight enemies.

- a. For every mythos die showing 4, lose one sanity.
- b. If you've rolled any doubles on the mythos dice, advance the time marker one space. You can prevent this by sacrificing 1D2 health or 1D2 sanity.
- c. If any enemies were generated (by rolls of 1, 2, or 3 on the mythos dice, from 1s rolled on the investigator dice, and/or from passing red spaces on the investigator track), you now have to fight them. See rules for combat below.

#### 4. Event phase

Check to see if the timer has reached the end of the time track and/or you've reached the end of the investigation track.

- a. If the timer has reached the end of the time track, the cultists gain one key. If this is the third key, you lose the game.
- b. If you have reached the end of the investigation track *and the end of the time track has not yet been reached*, you gain one seal. If this is your third seal, you win the game.
- c. In case of either a or b reset time and investigation tracks and resolve an event. Events are found below.

## 4. COMBAT

No matter if you're fighting deranged cultists or eldritch monsters, both you and they will roll a number of dice to find your combat value. If you roll equal to or higher than your opponents, you win. If not, you lose and take damage. Combat only lasts one round and consists of the following steps:

1. *Determine enemy strength.* Strength is the number of dice the opponent will roll.
  - a. Cultist strength is equal to the number of cultists generated by the mythos dice plus one for each red space you've passed on the investigation line (including the one you're currently on), and plus one for each investigator die placed near the mythos dice during the investigator step.
  - b. When battling a monster calculate cultist strength as normal. Then divide this by two (round up) and add D6 to the number. This symbolize that the cultists help the monster and boost its strength. So in any one turn you only ever fight cultists *or* a monster. If you've rolled double 1 you roll two dice to find the monster's strength and then use *the highest die*.
2. *Fight or flee.* Choose whether you want to fight or flee. If you wish to flee, advance the time marker one space and then take normal damage minus one (see below). So when fighting one or two cultists, fleeing wouldn't cause any damage, but only advance the time marker. If you flee a monster you roll the dice to determine damage and kind of damage, and only then do you subtract one. So a roll of 3 would give you two health damage.

The advantage to fleeing, besides the slight reduction in damage, is that you do not have to spend any fight and/or magic points. Do note that you are allowed to flee even if the time marker has reached the end of the time track.

3. *Gain fight dice.* When battling cultists you may gain one die for each point of fight spent and one die for each two points of magic. When fighting a monster it's the other way 'round.
4. *Find combat value.* Now roll all your fight dice. You may reroll any or all of your dice up to two times locking dice as you see fit. But for every one you roll on the second and/or third roll, advance the time marker one space. When fighting a monster all rolls of one – still from the second roll onward – are locked and require you to pay one sanity in order to unlock each die and roll them a third time. The locked ones still count toward your total combat value.

*Example: You are battling a monster of strength four using four fight dice. On your first roll you roll 1, 2, 3 and 6 and decide to keep the 6. On your second roll you roll 1, 5 and 4. This advances the time marker one step, and if you want to reroll the 1, you also have to pay one sanity. You choose to do so keeping the 4 and 5. Unfortunately you roll another 1 which will again cause you to advance the time marker one step. Now, your final combat value is  $4+5+6+1 = 16$ .*

5. *Roll and resolve.* You now roll all the enemy fight dice once and compare results. If that roll is equal to or lower than your combat value, you've defeated the foe(s) and nothing happens. If the monster/cultists roll higher than you did, you get damage the following way:
  - a. Cultists: lose health equal to the number of cultists divided by two (rounded up).
  - b. Monsters: roll a die, even numbers are applied as health loss, uneven as sanity loss.

You only fight one round of combat no matter if you win or lose.

## **5. WINNING AND LOSING**

You win by gathering all three seals. You lose if the cultists manage to gather three keys or if you ever run out of sanity and/or health.

## **6. OTHER RULES AND OFTEN OVERLOOKED ONES**

1. If you are attacked by a monster or cultists as a result of an event, you have to fight them immediately as normal using fight and/or magic. As always, you can also opt to flee.
2. You reset the time marker and the investigation track marker before resolving events. So the outcome of an event can influence these tracks.
3. When fighting a monster a point of magic will give you one die as will two points of fight. When fighting cultists one point of fight or two points of magic will give you one die.
4. Dice showing 1 are always locked when you roll investigator dice. You can unlock each die by paying one sanity. When fighting monsters 1s are locked if they show on the second roll and you can unlock them the same way.
5. During combat every roll of 1 on the second and third roll causes the time marker to advance one space. You may roll 1s rolled on the second roll again during the third roll, but doing so can lead to the time marker advancing once more.
6. When fleeing combat you are dealt normal damage minus one, but you also have to advance the time marker one space.

## **7. EVENTS**

Every time a seal/key is found, resolve an event. Events will require you to roll a die, make a choice or possibly both.

### **Event 1A – The dreamlands**

*Strange dreams of unnatural cityscapes torment your sleep and you wake feeling late. Far too late. Roll a die:*

1. The dream won't let you escape even when awake. Lose 1D3 sanity.
2. Lack of sleep takes its toll. Next turn you roll two fewer investigator dice than usual.
3. You realise it was not a dream, but a warning. You *are* in fact too late! Move the time marker one step forward.
4. It was just a dream, you tell yourself. Nothing happens.
5. As you ponder about the dream you gain insight in the abominations you face. Gain 1 magic.
6. The dream was a test, and you passed! Gain one sanity. Before you roll your investigator dice next time, take one die and place it showing any number.

### **Event 1B – The first lock is opened**

*You cannot prevent the worshippers of the unnameable other obtaining what they seek. And now you must pay the price!*

Choose either 1 or 2.

1. A hideous monster appears. Lose one sanity and fight it as you normally would.
2. Place an investigator die on the elder sign on the investigation track. Until you reach this space, you roll one less investigator die.

#### **Event 2A – A dark pact**

*As you delve deeper into forbidden lore, you learn of possibilities you had never imagined. But do you dare to use your newfound knowledge?*

If you wish, you may use magic to increase your health. Roll a dice for each point of magic you have. Gain one health for each die showing 5 or 6, lose one sanity for each die showing one. You do not gain or lose magic.

If you have no magic points or choose not to use the dark crafts, you gain 1D3 sanity.

#### **Event 2B – Time is of the essence**

*You are falling behind! And as the night of the dark ritual draws closer, you must delve deeper into the madness that is the mythos if you hope to prevail.*

Roll a die. You may choose to spend as many points as sanity as you will to roll one extra die per point. If you roll two or more dice, you may choose any one result.

1. Something breaks free. Lose 1D3 health.
2. It is a trap! Immediately roll two mythos dice and apply the results.
3. You foolishly lose yourself in ancient volumes of forgotten lore. Advance the time marker two spaces.
4. Ghostly apparitions attack you. Lose one fight and one magic. Lose one health and/or sanity for each point of fight/magic you do not have.
5. You find something. It's not much, but it may be crucial. Roll two investigator dice and apply the result. If both show 1 or 2, advance the time marker two spaces – other than that 1s and 2s have no effect. If you gain investigation this way, the red spaces are ignored.
6. You have it! Advance four spaces on the investigation track. Ignore red spaces you pass.

Questions or comments – write to [brynum@gmail.com](mailto:brynum@gmail.com)

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#### **Notes:**

This game is free to print and play.

Fonts on the game sheet are by H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society.

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